

INSPECTION REPORT

NETHER STOWE HIGH SCHOOL

Lichfield, Staffordshire

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124409

Headteacher: Ms J. Ward

Lead inspector: Mr D. Driscoll

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th January 2004

Inspection number: 259274

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools **after** Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	962
School address:	Nether Stowe High School St Chad's Road Lichfield Staffordshire
Postcode:	WS13 7NB
Telephone number:	01543 263446
Fax number:	01543 414602
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev I. Hayter
Date of previous inspection:	29 th September 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Nether Stowe is an average sized mixed comprehensive school, with a smaller than average sixth form. The great majority of students are white, although there are representatives of many different ethnic backgrounds at the school. The proportion of students whose mother tongue is not English is low and all are fluent in English.

Standards on entry to the school are average, although this has varied in recent years from above average for the students currently in Year 8 to below average for those currently in Year 7. Standards on entry to the sixth form are average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is average, but the proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is well above average; the school has a special unit for pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties, but all are integrated into the learning support department. Most students are on the register of special educational needs because they are dyslexic or because they have moderate learning difficulties, but there are also those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and hearing problems, or physical impairment, or who are autistic. There are now many more students with special educational needs at the school than there were at the time of the previous inspection, changing the nature of the school's intake considerably.

Students come from a very wide area, including from as far afield as Birmingham; socio-economic circumstances are broadly average.

The school received an Artsmark award, a school achievement award and a Sportsmark award in 2001. In 2003 the school gained Investors in People status and a Schools Extra Award. The school has difficulties in recruiting and keeping suitably qualified staff.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11933	D. Driscoll	Lead inspector	
9086	R. Watkins	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics.
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English.
4145	C. Harrison	Team inspector	Science. Physics.
10297	D. Cox	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT).
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design.
15208	A. Briggs	Team inspector	Music.
15832	J. Vanstone	Team inspector	History.
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography.
3793	J. Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages.
30973	G. Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology.
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education.
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education.
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Business studies
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs.
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship.

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a **poor** standard of education and provides **poor** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is poor in the main school because teachers cannot cope with pupils' poor attitudes and unsatisfactory behaviour; pupils are now badly underachieving as a result.
- Staff morale is very low as a result of poor leadership by the senior managers.
- There is a lack of consistency in many aspects of the school's work as a result of poor management.
- The school has reacted too slowly to changes in its circumstances because it does not analyse data sufficiently; the school's ethos is now poor.
- The education provided in the sixth form is good and students achieve well.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is good.
- Teaching in history and religious education is good, so pupils achieve well in these subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support in the learning support department.

Progress since the last inspection has been **very poor**. Standards are lower and exclusions have risen as behaviour has worsened. Teaching is now of a worse quality and pupils are underachieving in many subjects. Good progress has been made on improving spiritual development and providing religious education in the main school, but insufficient progress has been made in improving ICT, religious education in the sixth form and providing a daily act of collective worship.

In accordance with section 13 (7) of the School Inspections Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	C	B	D
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	A	A	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is **poor**. This is because pupils are underachieving in several subjects and many individual classes. Standards are average in Year 9 and below average in Year 11. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve better than others in Years 10 and 11 as a result of the very good teaching they receive in the learning support department; however, their achievement is still unsatisfactory overall. Boys do worse than girls, because their attitudes are poorer. Achievement in the sixth form is good; standards are above average on many courses.

Pupils' personal development and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **unsatisfactory**. Pupils' attitudes are poor and their behaviour is unsatisfactory. Attendance is above average, but punctuality is unsatisfactory. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes and attendance, and behave well.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **poor** quality of education. Teaching is **poor** because of the high proportion of lessons that fail to reach a satisfactory standard.. Teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because of the poor teaching in ICT and unsatisfactory teaching in citizenship, as well as the high proportion of unsatisfactory lessons scattered across other subjects. Teaching is good in history and religious education. Teaching is poor in Years 10 and 11 because of the very high proportion of lessons that fail to reach a satisfactory standard. Teaching is unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, systems and control, Spanish, citizenship and business studies. Teaching is poor in ICT. Teaching is good in geography, history, music, food technology, product design and religious education. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching is a result of teachers not being able to cope with pupils' poor attitudes and unsatisfactory behaviour, so pupils are not kept on task and do not do enough work.

Teaching is **good** in the sixth form. Most subjects are taught well and students make considerable gains in their knowledge and understanding. Only in business studies is teaching unsatisfactory, because too little is demanded of students.

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory**, it is good in Years 7 to 9, but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Provision for the care and welfare of pupils is **unsatisfactory** because of inadequate attention to health and safety requirements and unsatisfactory arrangements for providing advice and guidance.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **poor**. Several senior staff provide poor role models for staff and teachers' morale is very low. The systems for ensuring consistency in the school are not working. Governance is unsatisfactory; governors are not taking firm enough action to address the school's weaknesses and do not meet their statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. Parents' views are considerably poorer than at the previous inspection; they are particularly concerned about behaviour and the high turnover of staff. Pupils like history, but are fed up with lessons where behaviour is not controlled.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Provide training and support for teachers in dealing with behaviour and poor attitudes.
- Raise staff morale by ensuring all senior staff provide good role models in their work and provide better guidance and support for teachers.
- Ensure that policies are implemented consistently.
- Take greater note of trends in data and act on them more quickly to restore a satisfactory ethos for learning.

And in the sixth form:

- Improve the teaching in business studies.

And to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure pupils and students have their full entitlement in ICT and religious education.
- Carry out appropriate risk assessments and provide a daily act of collective worship.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a **good** education and its cost-effectiveness is **good**. Teaching and achievement are good overall.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well in many subjects as a result of good teaching.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in business studies, so students are underachieving.
- Results have improved since the school was last inspected.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is good . Marking is exceptionally good, but some students are not being allowed to develop independent learning skills sufficiently.
	Provision in French is satisfactory . Teachers emphasis grammatical accuracy, but do not allow students to do enough work for themselves in lessons.
Mathematics	Good . Teachers know their subject well, but do not communicate well enough with one another.
Science	Provision in physics is good . Students enjoy the subject because emphasis is placed upon students experiencing new effects for themselves.
Information and communication technology	Good . Teaching is good, but too few students, other than those taking ICT, get enough opportunities to improve their skills.
Humanities	Provision in geography is good . Students get good support, but more could be demanded of them in discussions.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is good . Students are given imaginative support, but do not have enough written guidance.
Business	Provision in business studies is unsatisfactory . Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, but the work is not sufficiently demanding.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Satisfactory attention is given to students' welfare and guidance.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The sixth form has made good progress in recent years, but currently does not have a designated head of sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are happy at the school and have no real complaints about their own education, other than some concerns about mathematics. They are particularly appreciative of the time and effort provided by their subject teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are average by the end of Year 9, but pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory because they are not reaching the standards of which they are capable. Standards are now below average by the end of Year 11 and pupils' achievement is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are not doing well enough in several subjects.
- Pupils underachieved in their GCSE examinations in 2003 and standards are now lower in Year 11.
- Pupils underachieved in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, but achievement is now satisfactory in English, Mathematics and Science.
- Pupils with special educational needs do very well when they are in the learning support department, but underachieve in the rest of the school.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are average. Nevertheless, pupils are underachieving because of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9. Results from the national tests in 2003 show that pupils did not do as well as they should have in English and that they did poorly in mathematics. This situation was better than in 2002, when pupils' results were well below the level expected given their results at the end of Year 6. In fact, results had been rising at a slower rate than the national picture since 2000 and so have been getting further away from the national average. The results in 2003 saw a very slight improvement, owing to the school's emphasis on supporting teachers in English, mathematics and science, with considerable help from the local education authority. This support continued in the new school year and, together with more stable staffing, has led to standards being average in English, mathematics and pupils no longer underachieving in these subjects.
2. Unfortunately, the recent improvement in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science has not been reflected in others. Standards are average in most subjects, and are above average in religious education; pupils achieve well in history and religious education as a result of good teaching. However, standards are below average in ICT, German, Spanish and citizenship; pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship and poor in ICT. Pupils are underachieving in these subjects because there is too much teaching that fails to reach a satisfactory standard. The below average standards in German and Spanish are not a concern, as these are second languages that pupils only start to learn in Year 8 and their achievement is satisfactory.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.8 (31.6)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	34.4 (34.5)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.4 (34.4)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 165 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The situation in Years 10 and 11 is worse than that in Years 7 to 9. The trend in GCSE results has been broadly in line with the national trend over recent years, but this masks a picture of results see-sawing between highs and lows that does not reflect the different standards on entry to the school from year to year. The results in 2000 and 2002, for example, were average overall, but were in the bottom five per cent when compared with similar schools. In 2001 and 2003, results were above average for the total points per pupil (average against all other measures in 2003), but still pupils underachieved given their standards when they were in Year 9. Standards are now below average and pupils' achievement is poor, because there are so many subjects and classes where pupils are underachieving..
4. Standards are above average in geography, history and religious education where pupils are achieving well as a result of good teaching. Teaching is also good in music, food technology and product design, so pupils achieve well. In English, mathematics, citizenship, Spanish and business studies, pupils are underachieving; achievement is poor in ICT and systems and control. In other subjects, pupils generally do as well as expected.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	52 (43)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (86)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	35.1	34.7

There were 180 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The inconsistency in GCSE results is mirrored by the inconsistency across subjects, often caused by staffing difficulties. Even where achievement is satisfactory overall, as in English in Years 7 to 9, there are individual classes that are not doing as well as they should because they have had so many different teachers in the past. How well pupils achieve depends on who teaches them and which class they are in. In 2003, for example, GCSE results in art were particularly poor because there had been several changes of staff; now the staffing is stable and pupils are doing as well as expected. In English, on the other hand, the situation has been reversed. In 2003 GCSE results were among the best in the school, but frequent staff absences have led to standards falling below average. Parents are rightly concerned about the effects of staff changes, especially in English and mathematics. In design and technology, pupils do well in food and in product design, but their achievement is poor in systems and control.
6. There is also inconsistency between the achievement of different groups in the school. Boys do not do as well as girls, mainly because their attitudes are worse but partly because some poorer subjects, such as systems and control, are dominated by boys. Overall, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. Within the specialist area, however, achievement is very good because pupils benefit from very good teaching and varied provision outside lesson times to help improve their reading and writing. In the school as a whole, there is too much inconsistency in planning for pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. As a result, the work is not suited to pupils' needs or the management of behaviour is poor, and pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

7. Standards have fallen since the previous inspection, when they were above average, and pupils are now underachieving, whereas they were achieving well.

Sixth form

Standards are above average and students are achieving well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well on many courses; results are well above average.
- Students are underachieving in business studies.

Commentary

8. Results in the 2003 A-level examinations were well above average, as they have been for the past three years. Results for males and females were similar. The standards of the students on entry to the sixth form fluctuate from year to year; they have been below average in the past but are above average this year. Each year's results show that students do well in the sixth form and achieve better standards than would be expected given their GCSE results.
9. Standards are above average in most subjects, so when all these above average standards are added together, students leave with a total A-level score that is well above average. In almost all the subjects inspected, students are achieving well. However, in French, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory, and in business studies standards are well below average and students are underachieving. The good level of achievement is down to good teaching and students' good attitudes to their work, whereas in business studies the unsatisfactory teaching is bringing about underachievement.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95.6 (92.9)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	32.8 (36.9)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	296.1 (307.5)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 41 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards are now higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection.

Pupils and students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Provision for pupils' personal development is unsatisfactory. Moral and spiritual development is satisfactory. Social development, including behaviour, is unsatisfactory and attitudes are poor. Pupils' understanding of other cultures is unsatisfactory. Attendance is good but punctuality is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The youngest pupils are mostly willing to work in lessons but older ones have poor motivation for learning.
- Pupils learn the difference between right and wrong but do not get the guidance they need to reflect this understanding in their own behaviour.
- Religious education makes very good provision for pupils to consider values and beliefs.

- Good arrangements to promote attendance help it to remain higher than is usually seen in other schools.
- Pupils' preparation for life in a multicultural society is unsatisfactory because the school does too little to expand their limited experiences.

Commentary

10. Attitudes are worse than at the previous inspection. Year 7 mostly work willingly, helped by the co-operative attitudes that many bring with them. Attitudes deteriorate among older pupils, who often show little interest in learning. They respond when activities are interesting but soon lose interest if the work appears boring. Pupils show considerable lack of confidence in teachers who do not use the necessary skills, for instance in those who allow the poor behaviour of a few to seriously interrupt a lesson.
11. Parents have considerable concerns about behaviour and they are right. Behaviour is worse than at the previous inspection because the school does not create the right atmosphere for learning. Some good steps are taken. Several subjects involve pupils in investigation and discussion of moral issues, and individual teachers encourage pupils to develop their own moral values. In their work, pupils demonstrate that they have a secure understanding of right and wrong. However, they do not translate this understanding and concern for others into their own lives in the school community. Many would like behaviour to be better but they lack self-control and depend on the teacher to keep order. They behave when teachers gain their respect by well-presented, relevant tasks and firm but fair management strategies. When these factors are present even classes with a high number of pupils 'on report' for previous poor behaviour may work and behave well. However, many other lessons are slowed, to some extent, by a high level of unnecessary chatter or by more serious misbehaviour of a few. The language a number of individuals use at times towards staff, as well as to each other, is unacceptable. In some instances, teachers give a poor example in their own attitudes and comments. Quite often pupils involved in poor behaviour have identified behavioural or educational needs, which are not being planned for in that class.
12. Occasional incidents of bullying or other harassment arise but they are usually tackled successfully by senior pastoral staff. Of more concern is the level of inconsiderate, rough behaviour that younger pupils have to learn to cope with as they change classrooms between lessons. Pupils mostly move in noisy, disorganised groups. Individuals rarely show any consideration even for adults. When staff are present they seldom do much to improve matters. It is commonplace to find pupils on corridors well after the lesson change, either because they have been kept by a previous class or simply because they feel in no hurry to reach their next one. Outside at lunchtime, behaviour of pupils is usually reasonable, despite the low level of supervision.
13. The many incidents of poor behaviour, especially in lessons, result in fixed term exclusions being somewhat above what is seen in other schools. Statistics suggest that pupils of Caribbean origin at the school are more likely to be involved in incidents serious enough to lead to fixed term exclusion than others are. However, the small numbers involved mean the school cannot draw any reliable conclusions about whether specific support should be targeted at this group. Internal exclusions are used more frequently than external ones. In addition there are many incidents, over 1000 during autumn 2003 and ranging from trivial to serious, when pupils are sent out of a particular lesson for a short period in the 'time out' room.
14. Religious education now provides very good opportunities for pupils to consider their beliefs and values and to explore ultimate questions of existence. Pupils respond well and their written work is sensitive and thoughtful. In music and art they reflect on their responses to what they

see and hear. Their appreciation is demonstrated in their willing participation in performance through which they are able to experience the exhilaration of being part of a joyful whole. In the school at large however, there is little evidence of pupils demonstrating sensitivity and reflection.

15. Provision for cultural development is strong in some respects. The school is rightly proud of its musical tradition and the large numbers of pupils voluntarily involved in extra-curricular groups demonstrates their appreciation of music. Drama is well supported, and pupils' visits to historical sites through history enable them to develop an appreciation of their heritage. In religious education and art they have the opportunity to explore other cultures; however, in general there are few opportunities for pupils to experience and so appreciate the benefits and problems of living in a multicultural society.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	866	81	2
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	5		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8		
Mixed – White and Black African	0		
Mixed – White and Asian	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	4		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	12	3	
Black or Black British – African	3		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4		
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	0		
No ethnic group recorded	46		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded. The number of pupils on roll is for the current year

Most pupils come to school regularly and do not stay away without good reason. This is helped by the way pastoral staff, with good administrative support, promptly follow up any unexplained absence. With support from the education welfare service, staff make good efforts to improve the attendance of the few who miss school more often. As a result unauthorised absence (truancy) is lower than often happens in other schools.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2002-2003) (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.7	School data	0.3
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Sixth form

Students' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are good. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, in response to the satisfactory provision made by the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students mostly show good responsible attitudes to their work
- Those students who train as peer mentors or who support clubs and sports teams make a good contribution to the school community.
- Opportunities to reflect on ideas and beliefs are rather limited for many students

Commentary

16. Students are mostly keen to learn. They appreciate the way teachers treat them as adults and expect them to take increased responsibility for their work. They relate well to teachers and to each other. They are happy to support each other and to work collaboratively when this is asked. On occasion they become really keen and responsive when activities promote such attitudes. Their mature attitudes leave little room for misbehaviour and they are generally co-operative even if teaching is less inspiring. They mostly arrive in time for lessons and they show a responsible attitude towards using time set aside for private study. Their attitudes towards the main school are much more negative. They regret the deterioration, for instance in retention of staff and in behaviour, that they perceive there.
17. A significant number of students develop their sense of responsibility through the way they contribute to the life of the main school as trained mentors, health education trainers and in their support for clubs and as referees. This enhances their personal development and leadership abilities. However, there is limited encouragement for others to take responsibility. The sixth form committee provides a forum for discussion, and on occasion initiates enthusiastic charity fund-raising efforts. Students decorated their common room last year and are now waiting for additional facilities. At present they are rather too ready to look to staff for instruction rather than to take the initiative. There are too few opportunities to develop their initiative and independence such as in participation in the 'Young Enterprise' scheme.
18. A growing number of students following the philosophy and ethics course are encouraged to question and reflect on life issues and so have good opportunities for spiritual growth. There is no religious education for all in the sixth form and the secular quality of the assemblies, when they take place, limits opportunity for the rest of the students.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory and leads to unsatisfactory learning. Teaching is poor in Years 10 and 11, leading to poor learning. The quality of assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and poor in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers struggle to control behaviour and pupils' poor attitudes.
- Teaching in the learning support department is very good, but inadequate attention is paid to pupils with special educational needs in other classes.
- Teaching fails to reach a satisfactory standard in several subjects, and there are too many occasions where individual lessons are unsatisfactory or worse.
- Teaching is good in history, food technology, product design and religious education.
- There is little consistency in the way that departments assess pupils and good practice is not shared across the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 198 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (1%)	25 (13%)	67 (34%)	75 (38%)	18 (9%)	9 (4%)	3 (2%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

Commentary

19. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is unsatisfactory because of the poor teaching in ICT, the unsatisfactory teaching in citizenship and the number of lessons that are dotted across other subjects where teaching fails to reach a satisfactory standard. Altogether, more than one lesson in eight is unsatisfactory or worse. Teaching is satisfactory in most other subjects, and is good in history and religious education. The unsatisfactory teaching of citizenship is having a big impact on pupils' achievement, because it is failing to develop better attitudes among pupils.
20. When lessons in the sixth form are taken out of the calculation, the summary of teaching in the main school changes to that shown in the table below.

Summary of teaching observed in Years 7 to 11 during the inspection in 157 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (1%)	20 (13%)	47 (30%)	60 (38%)	17 (11%)	9 (6%)	3 (2%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

21. There are two main causes, which themselves are linked, for the unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9. Firstly, teachers have difficulty coping with the pupils' poor attitudes. Pupils come to lessons in the wrong frame of mind for learning; they want to chat and mess around instead. This leads to teachers having to interrupt lessons at frequent intervals to get the class quiet and back on task. Often, individuals in the class will start to misbehave and teachers lose control. As a result, the whole class is disrupted and learning is unsatisfactory for all concerned. The other cause is teachers' lack of awareness of which pupils have special educational needs or how to deal with them. Teachers make very little use of the good information that is provided to them by the learning support staff, which includes strategies on how to deal with those pupils with behavioural difficulties, in planning their lessons. As a result, such pupils will misbehave and the whole class will produce little work. Pupils' attitudes are much better in Year 7 than other years; here teaching is of a much better standard because teachers do not have to spend time coping with immature behaviour.

22. Teaching is worse in Years 10 and 11, because poorer attitudes and worse behaviour exacerbate the problems seen in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, Spanish, citizenship and business studies, and poor in systems and control and ICT. Altogether, around one lesson in four is unsatisfactory or worse. Teaching is good in geography, history, music and religious education and satisfactory in all other subjects. In many classes, teachers constantly struggle to maintain control and very often this ends with teachers spending long periods of time simply trying to get pupils to work, often with little success. Homework and coursework are not co-ordinated, so pupils often struggle with too much work in the evenings while on other weeks they may have none at all.

23. Nevertheless, there are subjects in the school where misbehaviour never occurs. In history, for example, pupils come to the lessons keen and eager to learn. Time after time, pupils said history was their favourite lesson because they were active and did interesting things; parents agree with them. It is no coincidence that history produces the best results in the school, but it is also no coincidence that history has one of the most stable staffing complements either. In other lessons where they are active, such as in product design, food technology and religious education, pupils are kept busy and learn a lot. However, in other practical subjects where one would expect to see the same pattern, pupils are taught poorly, either because of the sheer number of different teachers, such as in ICT, or the poor demands made of pupils as in systems and control. Across the school, teachers know their subjects well but are not getting the opportunity to teach this knowledge to the pupils.

24. Going into the learning support department is like going into a different world; teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are very good and all is calm and purposeful. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils well and so plan lessons carefully to help them improve. Staff have very good knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn best and how challenging behaviour should be addressed. Lessons for small groups focus clearly on improving pupils' basic skills. Staff have high expectations of how pupils should behave. As a result, relationships are very good, with pupils behaving sensibly and showing good attitudes to their work. In mainstream lessons, teaching assistants give very good support to pupils. They

have a significant impact on pupils' learning for individuals, but there are not enough of them to cope with the rapidly increasing number of pupils with special needs.

Assessment

25. The weaknesses in assessment lie in how the school uses information it has about pupils' achievement in order to spot trends and to address any weaknesses. There is a wealth of information available but it is mostly the responsibility of heads of department to analyse this and to plan, taking the information into account. The heads of department sometimes manage to do this well but they are not always given sufficient support and simply do not know how to do it. In Years 7 to 9 there has been some support and it is beginning to have an effect in subjects such as science but support has not yet been available in other subjects such as citizenship and modern foreign languages. There is not enough monitoring of, for example, the performance of different groups of pupils at GCSE, so that departments are often aware of underperformance and do little to remedy it.
26. Although some subjects assess pupils' performance well there is inconsistency across subjects. For example, in geography and history, pupils know how they are doing and what they have to do to improve. In other subjects, such as English and business studies, the procedures are less informative.
27. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs, on the other hand, is very good. Data from primary schools is well used in planning programmes for new pupils. Regular assessments show staff how well pupils are achieving and information is fed into the clear targets in pupils' individual education or behavioural plans. This is why pupils achieve well against these targets. A very good feature of assessment procedures is the involvement of pupils in reviewing their own learning. Their comments appear on the review sheets and this boosts their self-esteem and encourages them to reflect on how they can improve.

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is good and brings about good learning. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are satisfactory.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection of the sixth form in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	5 (12%)	20 (49%)	15 (37%)	1 (2%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in most subjects, so students learn and achieve well.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory in business studies.

Commentary

28. Students in the sixth form are keen to learn and to take advantage of their teachers' good subject knowledge and willingness to give of their time. These better attitudes free teachers up to demonstrate the quality of their teaching. The breakdown of data from the lessons observed during the week of the inspection would not usually support a judgement of 'good' for teaching. However, it is clear from looking at students' files that they have covered a lot of work in considerable depth while they have been in the sixth form, and that this is a result of good teaching. The reason for the difference between the teaching figures and the evidence from the work seen in files lies with the problems lower down the school; teachers spent so much time preparing and worrying about lessons in Years 7 to 11 that they were unable to give of their best in the sixth form.
29. It is clear from the work seen that teachers expect much of their students, both in lessons and their own time. Resources are used well to make lessons interesting, although sometimes students have to spend too long listening to the teacher rather than being active. The weaknesses in business studies relate to the lack of challenge for students; not enough is demanded of them so they do not learn enough to gain the sorts of results of which they are capable.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. There is a good range of extra clubs and activities. The school has sufficient learning resources and accommodation, but not enough specialist teachers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 are not taught ICT, to which they are entitled.
- Pupils are provided with a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11.
- There are many opportunities for pupils and students, in all years, to attend extra clubs and activities.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.
- The lack of stable staffing is having a serious impact on standards.

Commentary

30. The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 because pupils are provided with a wide range of subjects that includes drama, plus the opportunity to study a second foreign language. All pupils now follow a course in ICT; the lack of ICT was a key issue in the previous inspection report. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because many pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to develop their ICT skills or to meet statutory requirements in this subject. In other respects, the curriculum has some good features, such as the number of subjects from which pupils can choose. In partnership with the local college of further education, pupils are provided with courses that meet their specific needs. A small number of pupils follow vocational courses such as hairdressing which meet their needs well.
31. The school now provides religious education for all pupils in Years 7 to 11; the lack of religious education was a key issue in the previous report. The way that all pupils study religious education to GCSE level means that they get an extra GCSE and it also boosts the school's overall performance. Careers education is good. A well-planned programme for Years 9 to 11

includes effective liaison to ensure good use of input from the Connexions service. Pupils are enabled to gain a realistic grasp of the range of post-16 options available to them.

32. Pupils are provided with a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. A significant number of pupils participate in music, sporting events and drama. However, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils who are gifted and talented. Provision is often left to subjects, so the implementation is patchy and not always monitored to see if there has been any impact on standards. A similar situation exists for improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than in English and mathematics; policies are not implemented and teachers largely do as they please.
33. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory overall, but very good in the learning and behavioural support department. Across the school there is insufficient use of the helpful information provided by the co-ordinator. This results in teachers giving pupils work that they cannot understand and learning is often unsatisfactory or poor. The school is not building on the very good work done in the specialist department area. Here, small group work is very well organised to help pupils learn better and improve their reading and writing. Before and after school, there are very effective sessions in reading for Year 7 and in writing skills for GCSE pupils. At lunchtime, staff are available to advise on homework or personal problems. The unit provides well for pupils with behavioural difficulties, and any pupils who need immediate help during the day. It also accommodates Year 7 pupils who use a commercial software program for 10 minutes each day to improve their spelling, reading and number skills. This gives pupils the chance to learn independently and record their own assessments. Teaching assistants offer a high quality of support in class and in the specialist base, but there are too few to meet the needs of pupils and to staff the unit.
34. The lack of a full complement of specialist staff is one of the biggest problems that the school faces. There have been long-term absences in the recent past, but these are compounded by many short-term absences, which are covered by temporary teachers. These absences affect many different subjects, but are particularly acute in English and mathematics where some classes have been taught by as many as seven teachers. In mathematics, there are still not enough teachers, leading to GCSE classes of 37 and the headteacher having to teach ten lessons per week.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Careers guidance is good
- Students are not provided with enough religious education.
- There are many opportunities for students to attend extra clubs and activities.

Commentary

35. The school provides a satisfactory range of courses, at different levels, that are suitable for the students staying on to the sixth form. However, the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall because the school does not teach enough religious education and so statutory requirements are not met. Students in the sixth form have the same good opportunities to enrich their studies as other students in the school. Careers education is good. Students receive good guidance about possible post-16 routes before they make the decision to join the sixth form. They benefit from a formal programme, geared to their needs. In addition the careers' co-ordinator is alert to give them individual guidance as the need arises. Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory in the sixth form.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

Provision for the care and welfare of pupils is unsatisfactory because of inadequate attention to health and safety requirements. Other aspects of care are satisfactory but advice and guidance are unsatisfactory. Careers guidance is good, as are the procedures for helping new pupils to settle in. The school takes satisfactory account of pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Guidance to help pupils acquire habits of good behaviour is unsatisfactory.
- Guidance to help pupils become effective learners is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils get very good support when they are in the unit.
- Gaps in health and safety procedures give rise to concerns about pupils' safety.

Commentary

36. Support and guidance suffer from big variations in quality. Support for pupils to develop habits of good behaviour is unsuccessful because of inconsistencies. Good analysis of data about use of sanctions was recently introduced. This has simplified the identification of pupils who need support for behavioural difficulties. Where focused support is given, for instance through an individual behaviour plan, the pupils benefit from good input from the special educational needs staff. However, when they are with their classes the guidance that they and indeed all pupils get about behaviour is, on balance, unsatisfactory. Variations in expectations and also in the use of sanctions make pupils unclear about exactly what is allowed. At times they are right in their feelings that they are not treated fairly.
37. Guidance for pupils about how to improve their work is also unsatisfactory. Again there are variations. Those with special educational needs receive good help from staff in the unit; for instance, they are consulted about their own individual education plans and their views are taken into account. Other pupils encounter some instances, for example in history, where the teacher helps them see exactly how they can improve. However, often they are vague about this and lack confidence that the teacher will help if they ask. They have target grades in each subject but frequently see these as being too easy or too hard to reach. The erratic use of homework and lack of co-ordination over coursework deadlines, so that pupils fluctuate between an overload of work and none at all, also detract from the quality of support for learning. Pupils' will to succeed is sapped. Staff try to raise the profile of achievement, for instance, through awards' evenings that celebrate success. However, on a day-to-day basis good attitudes and good work tend to go unnoticed while sanctions are more evident.
38. Special educational needs staff offer very good guidance to pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. They are available before, during and after school to give support. Pupils say they value the chance to sit quietly in the department and to talk to someone about their school work or personal problems. Individual education and behaviour plans focus well on helping pupils get on better at school. These plans are very regularly reviewed and individual interviews, which are carefully documented, give pupils the opportunity to be involved in their learning.
39. Concerns arise about the health and safety of pupils because routines for completing risk assessments are inadequate. Risk assessments for school visits get good attention but they are not in place for important aspects of physical education. This results in avoidable hazards

to pupils' safety. Lack of supervision at lunchtime is another concern. Parents of some pupils give permission for them to go off site at this time. However, no one checks which pupils leave the site and whether they have permission, so nobody knows who is, or is not, on site and this is unsatisfactory.

Sixth form

Satisfactory attention is given to students' welfare and personal guidance. Educational guidance is satisfactory. Students have satisfactory opportunities to express their views about aspects of school life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students appreciate the increased support from teachers that they find when they transfer from the main school to the sixth form.
- Deficiencies in risk assessment procedures cause concern for the sixth form just as they do in the main school

Commentary

40. Teachers provide a good atmosphere for learning in the sixth form; students are confident that teachers will make time to support them if they ever need extra explanations. Students benefit from the way they are encouraged to attend consultation evenings with their parents.
41. Health and safety concerns arise from gaps in risk assessments for physical education, just as in the main school. In addition, monitoring of students entering and leaving the site is inadequate. Year 12 students are appropriately monitored to make sure they use study periods sensibly. Year 13 are allowed to spend study periods at home, so long as they have parental permission. This greater personal responsibility is reasonable, though difficulties in finding the accommodation for study facilities on site prompts the arrangement. However, checks of when students leave the site and return need improving so that in case of an emergency staff know just where they are.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Main school

Partnership with parents and with other schools is satisfactory. Partnership with the community is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good efforts are made to inform and involve parents of pupils with special educational needs, and to involve parents if there are particular problems with behaviour or attendance.
- Good links with feeder primary schools smooth the transfer of new Year 7 pupils.
- The school gains good support from links with other agencies, including the youth service.

Commentary

42. Senior staff are keen to keep parents well informed. For instance, they identified that information in pupils' annual reports is variable, being good in parts but thin in occasional sections. They have already made progress towards greater consistency. Inconsistencies still need attention in the interim reports that parents also receive. The school has tried out a different system of consultation evenings for Years 7 to 9, offering parents an extended discussion with tutors, rather than meetings with subject staff. However, staff are now reviewing arrangements again because parents found that form tutors could not give them all the detailed information they wanted about their children's achievements. This was an especial concern when Year 9 pupils were choosing optional subjects to study for GCSE.
43. Liaison with parents is very good with regard to any pupils identified as having special educational needs. At the parents' meeting, confidence was expressed in the work of the department and in the varied provision available. Communication by telephone, letter and email keeps parents informed of pupils' progress and enables staff to learn more about pupils' difficulties. Good links with primary schools give the co-ordinator a chance to attend the annual reviews for Year 6 pupils and to collect valuable information about pupils due to join the school. There are good links, too, with outside agencies who assist in assessing pupils' needs by offering advice on teaching strategies. Senior pastoral staff also take good steps to liaise with parents when difficulties arise over a pupil's attendance, or if serious problems with behaviour are identified. However, parents find the response when they raise issues themselves, for instance if they write comments in pupils' planners, is variable and they do not always get the prompt acknowledgement they would like.
44. Good links with feeder primary schools contribute to the induction programme for Year 7 pupils. In addition to good arrangements to familiarise transferring pupils with their new surroundings, the school joins in local curricular initiatives to build continuity for them. Suitable links with a local college add to the breadth of the curriculum available to older pupils. Good links with the community, and especially with the adjacent youth centre, make a good contribution to the work of the school. For instance, the youth worker plays a key part in training peer counsellors and in supporting them to carry out their role. In addition, good links with a range of agencies result in effective liaison over the care of individual pupils with particular needs for personal support.

Sixth form

The sixth form has good links with parents, and satisfactory links with the community and with local colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good partnership is established with parents and they are happy with the provision made students

Commentary

45. Parents are well informed about the opportunities available in the sixth form before students choose to join. They are keen to give their support. They are happy with the consultation meetings arranged for them to meet with teachers and come to these in very good numbers. The annual reports parents receive generally give them a good level of detail about what

students have learnt, though reports could say more about what examination results students are on course to achieve.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher is unsatisfactory. The leadership by other senior staff is poor, as is the school's management. Governance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff morale is very low because teachers receive too little support from senior managers.
- Some senior managers set poor role models for staff and pupils.
- The school reacts too slowly to changes.
- Governors do not hold senior staff to account sufficiently.

Commentary

46. When the school was last inspected, standards were above average, behaviour was good and pupils were doing well as a result of good teaching. Since that time the school has gone downhill; standards have fallen, behaviour is worse and the quality of teaching is now poor. Most importantly, staff morale is now very low; teachers feel neither supported nor guided. Many speak openly of being at the end of their tether and of their plans to leave the school or the profession. They no longer respect some members of the senior management team because they know that some senior managers are not meeting their responsibilities. The role models set by some senior managers are particularly poor; some are rarely seen on the corridors, cannot control the behaviour of pupils and even their teaching is unsatisfactory. Some classes are released early, so pupils go and bang on the doors of other teachers' lessons. Pupils' attitudes are poor, particularly because of the way that Key Stage 4, the pastoral system and citizenship are managed.
47. Teachers have come to rely on their heads of department, rather than their line managers. Where departments are tightly knit teams who have worked together for some time, such as in history, high standards have been maintained. However, in subjects like ICT where the head of department has a different team of teachers every year, no such support mechanism is available and standards fall. Such a picture is common across the school because of the large number of staffing changes that have taken place; many leave because they cannot cope with the poor attitudes of the pupils without greater support. In several subjects, the schemes of work are not good enough to support new or temporary teachers, but senior managers have not addressed these failings. The lack of staff has led to large classes, heavy teaching loads and to the headteacher having insufficient time to manage the school because almost two days each week are spent teaching. Teachers have confidence that the headteacher will deal with individual cases of misbehaviour, but she is often not immediately available. Heads of department generally do a good job, but the lack of time available for them means they have little opportunity to check on their department's teaching.
48. Nobody is ensuring that all teachers adhere to the school's policies and this results in great inconsistencies across the school. Some teachers stick to the exact letter of the behaviour policy for example, while others remove pupils from their lessons for very minor offences. As a result, pupils are unsure as to where the boundaries lie as expectations are not consistently reinforced, either in lessons or on the corridors.

49. The nature of the school's intake has changed considerably; the proportion with statements of special educational needs is now the same as the proportion on the entire register at the last inspection. The school has not reacted quickly enough to these changes. The monitoring of the school's work is not sufficiently critical; reports on individual teachers and subjects fail to get to the bottom of difficulties and, instead, concentrate on more peripheral issues. Nobody has taken a firm grip of the school and the ethos for learning has slumped; there were over a thousand instances of pupils being sent to the 'time out' room during the autumn term, as well as many incidents where pupils simply are told to leave the lesson. Teachers often fail to cope with individuals because they have not received enough training and support to improve their skills in behaviour management.
50. The school development plan has exactly the right objectives and identifies many of the weaknesses noted in this report. Where actions have been taken, such as in the core subjects in Years 7 to 9, there have been clear benefits. However, the actions were not taken soon enough; the warning signs were there for years. For example, results in mathematics have been falling, relative to the national average, since at least 1999. Other data, such as GCSE results in individual subjects and how it relates to individual teachers, has not been analysed sufficiently to show such trends, but the trends are there.
51. The governors, too, bear a responsibility for the school's situation. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses but have not taken the firm action needed to address and rectify the weaknesses. They are supportive of the senior management, but insufficiently challenging and not ensuring that the school meets its statutory requirements in some respects.

Sixth form

The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory; its governance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors do not meet their statutory requirements.

Commentary

52. In contrast to the main school, standards have improved in the sixth form since the school was last inspected. Data is used to better effect here to identify where subjects are doing well or falling down. However, the school was forced to lose some staff at the end of the last academic year and one of these was the head of sixth form. The sixth form is 'ticking over' at the moment and all is satisfactory. A particular strength is the way that students feel they can rely on their teachers for all forms of advice and guidance. The only real weakness in the management of the sixth form is the way that governors have not insisted that the school provides all students with enough religious education, despite being aware of the situation.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,935,818
Total expenditure	2,955,661
Expenditure per student	3003

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	26,170
Balance carried forward to the next	6,327

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement, teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory.
- The department has adopted a number of the methods recommended in the National Strategy for Literacy and this has helped to raise standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve relatively well, compared with other pupils.
- The behaviour and attitudes of some pupils are poor and this disrupts learning in a number of lessons, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

Examination results

53. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 results were average; results have been getting further away from the national average since 2000, although there was a slight improvement relative to the national average in 2003. In 2003 GCSE results in English were average and in English literature they were below average.

Standards and achievement

54. By Year 9 many pupils possess a sound vocabulary, can express themselves clearly and are capable of making a worthwhile contribution to whole class or group discussion. However, the extent to which they are willing to do so varies from class to class and depends upon how confident they feel. Standards of reading are generally average. The vast majority of pupils can read independently and higher attainers can make some analysis of a writer's technique. In their written work, higher attaining pupils can write for different purposes and use an extensive vocabulary. The writing of other pupils, however, lacks sophistication and lower attainers rely heavily upon colloquialisms. The work of many middle and lower attainers is marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils underachieved in the national tests, given their results at the end of Year 6. The introduction of strategies recommended in the National Strategy for Literacy is having a very beneficial impact on standards and pupils are now doing as well as expected in Years 7 to 9.

55. In Years 10 and 11 the majority of higher attaining pupils further develop their skills in the subject. They become increasingly confident speakers, able to present a point of view

persuasively and capable of quoting relevant supporting evidence. They can understand more challenging literature and express their responses with clarity, using the appropriate technical terms. However, middle and lower attaining pupils, who are in the majority, develop their skills at a slower rate. Many of their oral contributions to lessons remain brief and they have limited ability when explaining themselves in response to questions. Such pupils do not learn how to structure their work to best advantage, or how to redraft it to improve its quality, to the extent that might be expected. Their understanding is often confined to the gist of what they have read rather than closely considering the meaning of the language. Pupils did better in GCSE English than they did in their other subjects, but much worse in English literature.

Teaching and learning

56. Whilst the department has retained a core of suitably qualified and experienced teachers since the last inspection, in recent years there have also been a number of staff changes and other difficulties, for example those arising from absences. At the time of the inspection a significant proportion of the teaching was being covered by supply teachers, very recently appointed teachers and teachers who were not specialists in the subject. This lack of continuity was having an adverse effect upon the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in some classes in Years 10 and 11.
57. When teaching is most effective, the teacher is aware of the pupils' prior attainment and ensures that the work in the lesson is adapted to meet their needs. In response, pupils concentrate well because they realise they are making progress. Pupils also respond well when the work is varied and they are given the chance to be active. In such lessons, pupils become involved in the tasks they are set and are enthusiastic. When teachers possess good subject knowledge they are able to probe pupils' thinking in some depth so as to increase their understanding and then lead them to be able to explain themselves with precision. When teachers' marking is detailed and contains relevant guidance, pupils take more pride in their work and know what they must do to improve. In Years 7 to 9 most teachers have adopted methods recommended in the National Literacy Strategy, such as the three-part lesson, and these are effective in enabling teachers and pupils to use the time available to best advantage.
58. The main reason for poor or unsatisfactory teaching and learning, seen especially in middle and lower ability groups in Years 10 and 11, is ineffective discipline by teachers and poor behaviour by pupils. In a number of lessons seen some pupils refused to co-operate with the teacher, were rude to the teacher and other pupils, and generally disrupted the work planned for the lesson. Teaching is also unsatisfactory when the teacher does not take into account the prior attainment of the pupils and their current needs; some teachers are often not aware of the identity and requirements of pupils with special educational needs. This was seen to result, for example, in the tasks being inappropriate and being set without adequate explanation, thus leading to pupils spending much of the rest of the lesson in confusion or becoming restless because they did not understand what was expected of them. More generally, in the most effective lessons, pupils are shown how to perform a task; in less effective lessons, they are told to complete it. When the teacher is late for the lesson, or is not adequately prepared, time is wasted.

Leadership and management

59. The head of department is a good role model. Schemes of work have been effectively revised in the light of the National Literacy Strategy and this has contributed to improved teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. She has managed the issues arising from considerable staffing difficulties as well as could reasonably be expected. Nevertheless, the lack of guidance and support from senior managers has meant that morale of teachers has fallen and standards and quality have declined since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. Standards of literacy are average and pupils possess a sufficient level of skills to give them access to the National Curriculum. However, standards could be raised further.
61. Though the school has a policy on literacy, much depends upon what individual departments choose to do. The result is inconsistency. There is good practice in some subjects, for example history and science, where pupils are required to conduct their own research, to produce extended pieces of writing and to write with a particular audience in mind. In general, however, there is no systematic programme of study that results in pupils being required to develop a full range of reading and writing skills. The work of many pupils is marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar but many of these are overlooked in teachers' marking. Teachers have received some training in the teaching of literacy as a basic skill, but there is no whole-school monitoring of its implementation.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	French: average German: below average Spanish: below average	French: average German: average Spanish: well below average
Achievement	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory Spanish: satisfactory	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory Spanish: unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory Spanish: satisfactory	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory Spanish: unsatisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	French: satisfactory German: satisfactory Spanish: unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not perform well enough in Spanish, especially in speaking, because the teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Girls do better in French than in other subjects they take in the school because they have better attitudes to the subject.
- Pupils do well in written coursework because they have more time to consider their answers.

Commentary

Examination results

62. In French, examination results were average in 2003; too few pupils took the GCSE in German and Spanish to allow comparisons to be made. Girls did better in French than in other subjects they studied.

Standards and achievement

63. By the end of Year 9 pupils are working around the level that would be expected in French. In German and Spanish, which are additional to French and where pupils have only had one

lesson a week since Year 8, they are working below the level that would be expected. In all three languages achievement is satisfactory. Most higher attaining pupils in French are writing accurately in a range of topics and can work in a variety of tenses, although there are fewer boys who are able to do this than girls. Lower attaining pupils can write short paragraphs but all pupils develop better skills in reading texts. They have more problems speaking with good pronunciation and find listening to tapes difficult. In German and Spanish, pronunciation is similarly weak and pupils have less well developed writing skills because of the shorter time they have had to learn the language

64. By the end of Year 11 pupils' skills are average in French. Higher attaining pupils can produce some good quality written work as part of their coursework but boys in particular make less progress in speaking. They do not volunteer answers as often in class, often take longer to start work in class and so do not succeed as well as the girls in examinations. Pupils develop good skills in reading texts. In German, where numbers of pupils are small, pupils are currently working at levels that would be expected nationally and are achieving satisfactory standards. In Spanish currently, pupils are not progressing as well as they might. They have gaps in their basic knowledge of grammar and their speaking is poorly developed. This means that many pupils are working with very short sentences and rarely manage questions. They perform better in coursework where they have more time to work out and refine their answers.

Teaching and learning

65. In all three languages the teaching has strengths in common. For example, pupils are expected to listen carefully to the teacher and are treated fairly but firmly when they misbehave. Teachers explain clearly what pupils have to do, using the foreign language as often as possible. Homework is set regularly and is linked well to work that has happened in the lesson, allowing pupils to follow up what they have learnt in class. In the good lessons, teachers set a lively pace which allows pupils time to revise key language in ways that are motivating and fun. Pupils enjoyed, for example, playing a game where they had to guess which pictures the teacher was holding. Pupils are well prepared for the demands of the examination. Teachers use ICT well, for example to help pupils to make presentations. Pupils record vocabulary well in their exercise books but there is inconsistency in the way that grammar is recorded.
66. In the weaker lessons, which occurred more often in Spanish, pupils had work that was often much too difficult for them and they were not given adequate time to revise or learn vocabulary before being expected to use it. This meant that the listening or speaking exercise that followed was almost always done badly. During many speaking tasks pupils were not corrected often enough on poor pronunciation and so continued to make the same mistakes. Although most teachers use tapes regularly during lesson time, pupils find this one of the most difficult skills. Occasionally, pupils benefit from using the headsets so that they can pause the tape at the appropriate moment, instead of having to wait for the teacher. Lower attaining pupils often find the tasks beyond them and do not often benefit from having worksheets adapted for their needs. Boys and lower attaining pupils have a tendency to give up at the beginning of a listening task and never regain the momentum. In Spanish, very few pupils gain high marks in their speaking examination as they do not get enough practice in class. They rely heavily on reading out answers from books or sheets and do not work enough from memory.

Leadership and management

67. The department now provides a similar quality of education to that at the time of the previous inspection except in Spanish, where results have declined. The schemes of work do not accurately reflect how much language can realistically be taught in the time available in Years 7 to 9 in German and Spanish and, therefore, teachers are struggling to fit too much into the time available. Although results have been analysed, there has been insufficient time for the new acting head of department to address the issues identified, such as the underachievement of boys and the weakness in speaking skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers, especially in Years 10 and 11, do not control behaviour sufficiently to ensure that pupils achieve in lessons, and higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged.
- The adoption of the three-part lesson, especially in Years 7 to 9, assists in the raising of achievement.
- Standards and the quality of teaching have declined since the previous inspection because of the large turnover of teaching staff.
- The monitoring of teaching is inadequate to raise achievement.

Commentary

Examination results

68. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were broadly average but have fallen in relation to the national average every year since 1999. The GCSE results in 2003 were also average, but pupils did worse in mathematics than they did in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

69. By the end of Year 9, pupils' numerical skills are average. Higher attaining pupils can calculate the interior and exterior angles of regular polygons and express this algebraically. The lower attainers can use algebra to work out the unknowns in simple expressions. Pupils' achievement in the tests was poor, given their results at the end of Year 6. Teachers are now being helped to use the methods recommended in the National Strategy for Numeracy and this is leading to better standards and pupils no longer underachieving in Years 7 to 9. In Year 11, higher attaining pupils can collect and process data in order to construct cumulative frequency graphs. The lower attainers can solve basic algebraic equations.

Teaching and learning

70. Standards and the quality of teaching have declined since the previous inspection owing to the large turnover of teaching staff. As a result, pupils have gaps in their learning, especially in Years 10 and 11, and this affects their ability to achieve. In the better lessons, usually in Years 7 to 9, teachers now use the three-part lesson structure. However, the starts and finishes are not as effective as they could be to engage pupils' interest and revise what has been learnt. In the better lessons teachers share their planning and lesson objectives with the pupils. Where this happens, pupils understand the relevance of the work and achieve well. In the best lessons teachers have a good rapport with the pupils and manage their behaviour well. In Years 10 and 11, teachers do not control behaviour sufficiently, so the lessons are disrupted and pupils do not make enough progress. Higher attaining pupils in all classes are insufficiently challenged to achieve their potential. Self-evaluation is not a common feature in lessons. However, in a Year 7 lesson on multiplication by partition, the teacher asked pupils to indicate what they had learnt by raising their hands. This allowed the teacher to see who was achieving and who needed further support. Homework is provided, but not on a time-tabled basis. This leads to inconsistent expectations of pupils. Formative comments are evident in some teachers' marking; however, this is not consistent across all classes.

Leadership and management

71. The head of faculty and second in charge have endeavoured to maintain the department in very challenging circumstances. The recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff have been a constant problem; leadership has been satisfactory but they never have the same team to lead for any length of time. However, the monitoring of teaching is insufficient to assist teachers to develop and hence raise achievement. Schemes of work do not support teaching or challenge pupils appropriately. The use of performance data is not sufficiently developed to identify the pupils' value added progress or to substantiate their targets.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Standards of basic mathematical skills are average, but the strategy for teaching mathematics as a basic skill in subjects is unsatisfactory. The responsibility for the position of numeracy co-ordinator is unclear to those concerned. There is no numeracy strategy in place to embrace and lead on numeracy within the mathematics faculty or extend it across other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes towards their work and teachers have to spend much time and energy overcoming pupils' reluctance to learn.
- There are a few very good lessons where pupils enjoy themselves, work hard and learn very quickly.
- Teachers in the department are knowledgeable and generally have good teaching skills.
- The department does not make enough use of lesson observations, or the monitoring of pupils' exercise books, to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching across the various groups.

Commentary

Examination results

73. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results matched the national average and were similar to those for 2002. Since 2000, results in these tests have risen more slowly than the national trend. GCSE results for science in 2003 were in line with the national average and significantly better than the results for 2002. Girls gained similar results in science to their average across all their subjects. However, boys did better in science than in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

74. Although standards are average overall, there is a wide range of standards across the different ability sets. Higher attainers generally work at standards that are above the national average. For example, in Year 11, pupils in the top set worked confidently and efficiently to investigate the refraction of light through a glass block. They understood exactly what they were doing and measured angles as accurately as they could. Similarly, in Year 9, higher attaining pupils demonstrated good knowledge of the various components of blood and their major functions.

75. Lower attainers often understand the basic scientific ideas but weak literacy skills, poor handwriting and untidy presentation hamper their written work. Higher attaining pupils are generally successful with questions involving calculations, but pupils in lower sets need to try more examples to increase their confidence. Pupils' investigative skills broadly match those in other aspects of science, but there is scope for improvement in the GCSE coursework marks for investigations.

76. In Year 9 and Year 11, pupils do as well in tests and examinations as might be expected, given their test results when they entered the school. Hence their overall achievement by the age of 16 is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

77. There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching within the department and this is shown by the activities indicated in pupils' exercise books. Some books record a really interesting 'diet' whereas others show a satisfactory, but more ordinary, experience.

78. There are a few very good lessons. Where teaching is very good, pupils expect to work hard; they enjoy the lessons, work very well and learn very quickly. For example, in a Year 10 lesson for lower attainers, the teacher explained, with frequent questions to involve pupils, the functions of the skin. Pupils concentrated furiously as the teacher wove into his story wild animals, television programmes, a well-known make of vacuum cleaner, the need to have baths (but not too often!), his own feet, *Pop Idol*, ducks, sunbathing, the difference between black and white skin, skin cancer, a model of the skin and much more. Throughout, there was

a very clear emphasis on precisely what pupils needed to remember. The result was that pupils did remember and could explain, at the end of the lesson, how the skin does its various jobs.

79. Other teachers, while not possessing quite the same flair as those who teach very good lessons, nevertheless have good teaching skills and secure subject knowledge. These teachers, who might generally be expected to teach good lessons, often do not succeed in doing so and many of their lessons are satisfactory. The explanation lies in the unsatisfactory attitudes of many pupils. These pupils arrive at lessons disinclined to make any real effort and wishing only to chat and waste time. Much of the teacher's energy then has to be devoted to managing these pupils and maintaining satisfactory standards of behaviour. Inevitably this takes up valuable lesson time, slows the pace of learning in the lesson and, eventually, has an impact on pupils' performance in examinations.
80. In the satisfactory lessons, there are some weaknesses. In particular, the beginning of many lessons is slow. Teachers do make use of starter activities as recommended in the Key Stage 3 strategy, but often these activities take too much time and do not succeed in setting a brisk pace that can be continued into the rest of the lesson.
81. Pupils' books in Years 7 to 9 show that they get relatively few opportunities to develop their investigative skills. This shortage of early experience makes it more difficult for pupils to gain the best possible marks for investigative coursework in Years 10 and 11.

Leadership and management

82. The head of department sets a good example for the department, notably in the quality of work seen in her pupils' exercise books and her very detailed marking. Teachers and technicians work well together as a team and provide much mutual support. However, the quality of teaching, and, in particular, the marking of pupils' books, does vary between different teaching groups. The department does not make enough use of lesson observation, or the monitoring of pupils' exercise books, to improve the consistency of teaching quality across the department.
83. GCSE examination results are not as good, relative to national averages, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Teaching is now satisfactory, rather than good as it was at that time. Hence the department has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **poor**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Poor	Poor
Teaching and learning	Poor	Poor

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to work are poor because teachers' expectations are too low.
- Pupils are underachieving because they do not have consistent access to specialist teachers.
- Teaching by subject specialists is good and pupils achieve well.

Commentary

Examination results

84. Examination results in the GNVQ ICT were below average in 2003. A very high proportion of pupils gained no grade whatsoever in 2003.

Standards and achievement

85. By the end of Year 9, pupils' practical skills are well below average. Their ability to use computers to measure events and control devices is well below average because they only have limited access to these aspects. Their understanding of the theory associated with the subject is below average. Pupils underachieve because they do not have consistent access to specialist teachers. When taught by specialists, pupils do well. For example, in a Year 7 class, pupils achieved very well when producing a three-fold leaflet. Pupils approached the task eagerly, used the digital camera and the scanner confidently and all described their work using technical terms. However, when pupils are taught by non-specialists or temporary staff, they underachieve because tasks lack challenge and pupils become bored; unsatisfactory attitudes quickly follow. By the end of Year 11, pupils' skills are well below average. They produce good quality presentations and use email with ease, but their ability to use spreadsheets and databases is weak. Above all else, pupils do not have the depth of knowledge and understanding to enable them to succeed in examinations.

Teaching and learning

86. Specialist teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. For example, in a Year 7 class, the teacher's excellent knowledge of control systems enabled pupils to grasp the concept of switching. When teachers have a poor grasp of how to teach ICT, then pupils make poor progress. Some classes have two different teachers. In these cases pupils can make very good progress with one teacher and do nothing with the other.
87. Pupils often arrive late to lessons and this disrupts the learning of other pupils. Teachers do not always question why pupils are late and other pupils think this is not fair. Most pay attention when the teacher is speaking, but as soon as they move to computers some will surf the Internet or just sit and chat. Teachers go around getting pupils back on task, but as soon as they turn their back, the pupils stop working again. The planning of lessons is unsatisfactory, particularly for pupils with special educational needs where many teachers pay no attention whatsoever to the requirements of individual education plans.

Leadership and management

88. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The subject leader knows what is required to remedy the poor situation but has had little support from senior staff. Monitoring of staff is almost impossible given the large number of temporary staff or non-specialists teaching the subject. The subject was of concern previously and this remains the case. Teaching has not improved and the achievement of pupils is poor.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

89. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is unsatisfactory; standards are below average in Years 7 to 9 and well below average in Years 10 and 11. The number of lessons taken up with examination courses in Years 10 and 11 means that there are too few computers available on a regular basis for other teachers to use. The new co-ordinator has undertaken an audit of ICT within subjects but there is little monitoring to ensure pupils actually receive their entitlement. As a result, pupils are having varied experiences and not enough opportunities to practise and develop skills.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to pupils achieving well.
- Higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 11 have good writing skills.
- Some lower attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not achieve well enough because they have poor attitudes to learning and their behaviour is not controlled.

Commentary

Examination results

90. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were average but an improvement on the previous year's results. Higher attaining girls achieved particularly well.

Standards and achievement

91. By the end of Year 9, pupils have good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics and have a sound foundation of geographical skills. Map skills of some pupils, however, are below average because accuracy is reduced by untidy and unfinished work. Pupils know a wide range of terms such as those associated with erosion of the landscape, and write clear descriptions but do not use examples enough in their explanations. Some pupils use ICT well to present work in extended assignments but it is under-used to research topics. By the end of Year 11 pupils achieve well, based on their standards on entry to the course. They build on map and graphical skills and use them well in assignments, especially in fieldwork. Standards in coursework are above average. The work is well organised and enhanced through good use of ICT. Higher attaining pupils show above average research skills and analyse evidence carefully but others do not integrate illustrative work enough in writing.

Teaching and learning

92. In Years 7 to 9 many pupils respond well to the support and encouragement that teachers give them and the quality of work is often good as a result. Year 7 pupils, for example, enthusiastically expressed ideas and feelings in poetry about what it might be like to experience an earthquake. The aims of lessons are clear and a variety of resources used to provide a stimulus for learning, but not enough use is made of atlases. Work is regularly marked and encouragement given, but there is insufficient evaluation of the content and of how to improve. Occasionally learning is not effective because some pupils have poor attitudes and the teacher is unable to maintain discipline. In Years 10 and 11 teachers are subject specialists and pupils learn well as a result. Teachers manage classes very well and, as a result, lessons proceed smoothly and much is achieved. Pupils know what is expected of them; they are well behaved and concentrate on learning. The work in books reflects the positive attitude, particularly the high quality of care evident in coursework. Occasionally teachers do not expect enough of pupils in the quality of written and oral contributions.

Leadership and management

93. The subject is well led and managed and pupils and staff feel well supported. Planning is satisfactory but there is insufficient attention to the analysis and use of data to improve standards. The teaching programmes are being revised well but do not yet include planning to promote pupils' literacy, ICT and citizenship skills. Access to computers is improving but teachers have not had training so their confidence in using computers is insecure. The subject has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in maintaining the good quality of learning in Years 10 and 11 and fieldwork throughout the school.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave and achieve equally well because enthusiastic teachers provide interesting, challenging lessons that are well matched to pupils' learning needs.
- The proportion of pupils choosing to continue with history to the age of 16 is much higher than the national average.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because teachers expect them to do well and prepare them thoroughly for GCSE examinations.
- Teachers in Years 7 to 9 do not sufficiently confirm their good oral feedback with written advice, about ways to improve, on pupils' work.

Commentary

Examination results

94. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were above average and pupils did much better than in the other subjects they studied. This continued the trend of recent years.

Standards and achievement

95. In Year 9, pupils impressively use good analytical skills orally, as in a lesson in which they rose to the challenge of identifying the persuasive tactics used in World War 1 recruitment posters. A satisfactory proportion of pupils also write well-developed answers, although pupils of lower attainment often fail to include enough detail to convincingly demonstrate their knowledge and understanding on paper. By the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement is good. The proportion of pupils who opt to continue with history is far higher than the national average and they achieve GCSE results that are above average. Higher attaining pupils write particularly well and evaluate carefully, for example the extent to which Custer was responsible for the defeat in the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Teaching and learning

96. In Years 7 to 9, all pupils benefit from being taught by enthusiastic teachers who expect and receive high standards of work and behaviour. Teachers explain clearly the aims of lessons and employ a good range of learning strategies that skilfully ensure pupil gains in knowledge and understanding. Consequently, pupils who are 'on report' for poor behaviour elsewhere invariably engage fully in lessons and behave well. Teachers use well-tried methods to strengthen pupils' literacy but the range of strategies they adopt is not yet extensive enough. Pupils benefit from good oral feedback on their written work although this good advice on how to improve is insufficiently under-pinned in teachers' comments in pupils' books.
97. By the end of Year 11, pupils have achieved well in developing skills in organising and presenting assignments because teachers have emphasised this in lessons. Similarly, teachers' extensive knowledge of examination requirements results in pupils being well prepared. Learning is enhanced by teachers organising visits to places such as the neighbouring village of Shugborough and the Imperial War Museum in Manchester; this enables pupils to link theoretical study to events and places.

Leadership and management

98. The subject is well led and managed. The enthusiastic recently appointed subject leader has carried on from his predecessor with a clear vision that is reflected in development plans that are clearly focused on further raising pupils' achievement. Pupils thrive in the care of an experienced and dedicated team and show their appreciation and respect both when asked for their opinion of the subject and, most importantly, in the way they enjoy their lessons. The good standards in history, reported in the previous inspection, have been maintained.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High expectations of behaviour enable the use of imaginative methods of teaching.
- Pupils are achieving well as a result of good teaching.
- Opportunities for spiritual development are very good.
- Pupils are not involved in the assessment and evaluation of their work and so they have insufficient understanding about how to improve.
- There is insufficient first hand experience of other beliefs and cultures through visits or visitors to support the appreciation of life in a multicultural society.

Commentary

Examination results

99. Results in the 2003 examination of the full course GCSE were average. Pupils, in particular the boys, are achieving well when compared to their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

100. By Year 9, pupils can compare and contrast well the different aspects of the major faiths and, with guidance, identify the common elements; they recognise the way people mark rites of passage and are able to reflect on the importance of these events. They have the opportunity to reflect on their hopes for the future and for their children. In a 'letter to my unborn child' pupils demonstrated great sensitivity and spirituality. They demonstrate good research skills using the Internet and textbooks; however, there are insufficient suitable resources in the library to enable them to follow independent lines of enquiry by other means. Written work is presented clearly and opportunities to work collaboratively on group presentations result in attractive and effective displays. Lower attaining pupils demonstrate less independence and their responses are more limited and dependent on information provided. Pupils achieve well, given their standards on joining the school.
101. By Year 11, pupils have a good grasp of the key teachings of the Christian and Islamic traditions and are able to relate them to the contemporary issues studied. Pupils recognise different views and are able to make simple judgements about their opinions, although their reasoning is limited. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate understanding of the Christian and Islamic teaching against inequality; however, there is insufficient first hand contact with people and places of the beliefs studied in order to enable pupils to appreciate the benefits and problems of worship in a secular, multicultural society. Written responses are clearly linked to examination questions and there is less independent reflection and analysis than in Years 7 to 9. Coursework is well organised and the effective support of teachers enables pupils to

present work clearly and with good detail. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the examination course and the majority sit the examination.

Teaching and learning

102. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and, in most cases, pupils respect this standard, enabling teachers to deliver well-planned lessons that involve pupils actively in their learning. Tasks set in Years 7 to 9 in particular are imaginative, and the use of the arts supports the development of their understanding of abstract concepts, such as worship. The absence of a full-sized television for the showing of videos limits the experience of the pupils when seeking to understand the visual impact of ritual such as Hajj, or the lives of believers in other cultures. Teachers clearly value pupils' contributions and, as a result, most participate well and listen to each other. Topics are well planned over time to develop pupils' thinking and evaluative skills, and the use of task sheets enables pupils to take on extended work at their own pace, suited to their needs. Marking is generally regular; however, there is insufficient involvement of pupils in the assessment and evaluation of their work. As a consequence, they have insufficient information to enable them to judge their progress or to know how to improve.

Leadership and management

103. The subject benefits from a very committed team of experienced teachers who are led well by a head of department who is prepared to experiment, and to seek solutions to problems. Areas of weakness, such as assessment, have been identified and are being addressed with the pupils' needs in mind. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are undeveloped, but the close co-operation of the team promotes the sharing of good practice that supports pupils' achievement.

104. The school has done much to support the development of the pupils' religious education and the effects are clear in the pupils' attitudes towards the subject, and the rising numbers continuing the subject into the sixth form. Progress since the last inspection, when it was a major weakness, has been very good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of systems and control is poor and pupils are underachieving badly as a result.
- The planning for individual pupils' needs within lessons is not good enough, and this results in underachievement for some pupils.
- The quality of leadership is good and provides a clear direction for the subject and a supportive environment for pupils and teachers.
- Standards are above average in food technology and product design.

Commentary

Examination results

105. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were broadly average. Girls performed much better than boys. Both boys and girls performed much worse in design and technology than in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

106. By the end of Year 9, pupils' designing and making skills are average; this represents satisfactory achievement given pupils' standards on entry to the school. They use a variety of tools and equipment competently and with confidence in all material areas. Pupils' making skills are good in product design and food. Pupils make interesting products using a range of materials and make good use of ICT and computer-aided design and manufacture. By the end of Year 11 standards of designing and making are below average. This represents unsatisfactory achievement since Year 9. Standards in product design and food are good and pupils achieve well; however, the standard of pupils' work in systems and control is poor because of poor teaching. These pupils are almost exclusively boys. Good use is made of ICT overall and, in product design, pupils are using computer-aided design software to produce accurate, well-presented projects.

Teaching and learning

107. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers who demonstrate an interest in the subject. Lessons are well planned and the pace of lessons is usually brisk. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of pupils of all levels of attainment and pupils with special educational needs progress at a rate which matches that of other pupils. However, work is not sufficiently matched to the needs of the pupils and higher attaining pupils are not consistently extended or fully challenged. Some teachers are unaware of the needs of lower attaining pupils and how to deal with them.
108. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is unsatisfactory because of the wide variation across the department. In food technology and product design, teachers have high expectations and assessments are used well to help pupils' learning improve. However, in systems and control teaching is poor. Pupils are seriously underachieving because of the lack of guidance and support given to them; pupils' examination coursework is inadequate because they have little understanding of the requirements, and they do not have the knowledge to complete their assignments. When challenged and engaged by teachers, pupils' attitudes are positive; they are interested and take pride in their work. The monitoring of pupils' progress during Year 11 provides very useful information; in food technology, assessments are used to set meaningful targets for pupils – this is good and leads to improvement. However, across the department the use of assessment is very inconsistent and is unsatisfactory overall.

Leadership and management

109. The department is led well, new teachers are supported and there is a positive working relationship between the teachers. The head of department has a clear vision for the subject and has developed a range of policies and procedures to improve pupils' performance; however, these are yet to impact upon standards. This lack of impact is down to insufficient monitoring and action being taken at a senior level within the school. Many of the strategies now in place are helping to raise the standard of pupils' work. Unsatisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Standards are now below average and pupils are underachieving because teaching in Years 10 and 11 is now unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers have good knowledge and expertise and support pupils well.
- Teaching and learning have been disrupted by a very significant number of changes in staffing since the previous inspection.
- Some pupils, boys in particular, do not work diligently enough.
- There is insufficient three-dimensional work.

Commentary

Examination results

110. GCSE examination results were well below average in 2003. Until this year all pupils had to take an arts subject and a greater than average proportion of pupils chose art. Pupils' results in art were worse than in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

111. By Year 9 drawing and painting skills are average. The best work is that done from direct observation where pupils apply shading well to achieve tone and texture. There is a good range of experimental work done but much of it is not brought to a successful finish. There is insufficient work in three dimensions and pupils are denied some valuable experiences in this respect. There are good imaginative programmes of work to help pupils to use ICT for research. This work has been successful in Year 7, but it is unsatisfactory in Year 8 because the pupils cannot understand the very sophisticated language describing and explaining the concepts of the Futurist movement in art.
112. By Year 11, pupils research and develop their work in a logical progression under the guidance of the teachers. However, the pupils do not always have a clear understanding of where they are going. They do not have clear written plans for the whole project that would be of benefit in their independent studies. Drawing and painting based on studies of natural forms are of a high quality. Work on texture is less well explored. Girls' achievement is better than boys because they show more interest, work harder and do homework more seriously. Around one in three boys do not show a clear commitment to their work and a few show potential to disrupt others even when the teachers maintain a firm discipline.

Teaching and learning

113. Teaching and learning have been disrupted by a very significant number of changes in staffing over the past five years. This has affected the continuity of pupils' learning and has adversely affected standards from time to time. At present the staffing difficulties seem to be resolved. The teachers have good knowledge and expertise that they impart to their pupils. They maintain a good climate for learning in lessons and give good individual support at the appropriate level to all pupils in turn. This ensures that all pupils make satisfactory progress in individual lessons. Assessment is thorough, but does not involve self-assessment so pupils do not have a clear idea of how they can improve.

Leadership and management

114. There is clear vision for the subject but not enough detail in planning to support new teachers. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning were good then and are now satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 because of the good teaching.
- There are not enough computers or electronic keyboards to allow all pupils to achieve as well as they should in these aspects in Years 7 to 9.
- A minority of pupils behave so badly in lessons they disrupt others' learning.
- Pupils have lots of opportunities to take part in high quality music ensembles that enhance their learning and social skills.

Examination results

115. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were average. Girls did better than boys. Pupils did not do as well in music as they did in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

116. Higher attainers achieve well in Years 7 to 9, and in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 9, pupils who receive tuition from the visiting tutors achieve high standards of performance. However, pupils do not get access to computers with music software and, as a result, they cannot create, refine or develop their musical ideas, and they underachieve in this aspect. By the end of Year 11 higher attainers are good performers on their chosen instruments. Using music software they compose pieces that demonstrate a clear understanding of structure and musical shape. Lower attainers use keyboards to create simple pieces but struggle to refine their pieces and improvise. Theory work is of a lower standard but still shows a reasonable grasp of the knowledge required for the examination.

Teaching and learning

117. Pupils learn well in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is knowledgeable with good demonstrations in the best lessons. Over the last two years the teachers' own assessment of pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 has been overly optimistic and significantly above the level reported nationally. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 show good attitudes to their work because relationships within lessons are good and there is an effective environment to encourage learning and to build pupils' confidence. Lessons are planned well and show that the needs of individuals are tackled effectively. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers allow pupils to misbehave and disrupt the learning of others because of a slow pace and mundane teaching. The quality of the tuition provided by the local music service's visiting teachers is generally good and pupils achieve well as a result.

Leadership and management

118. The day-to-day management of the department, including the wide range of extra-curricular groups and instrumental tuition, is good. Resources are unsatisfactory because there are not enough electronic keyboards and several are badly damaged and need either to be replaced or upgraded. Not all pupils treat the instruments carefully enough, storing them in an untidy pile in the corner of the room. There are too few headphones, which makes it hard for pupils to concentrate. The requirement for using ICT within the subject is not being met because there are not enough computers to allow all pupils to make use of music technology. There are good opportunities for social development through taking part in the musical extra-curricular ensembles. These groups contribute to the local community well and regularly undertake foreign concert tours.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong extra-curricular sport programme offers good opportunities for all pupils, particularly the gifted and talented, to excel.
- Health and safety risk assessments have yet to be completed.
- Standards have fallen since the last inspection and planning is not yet good enough to improve the situation.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes of a significant number of Year 11 pupils adversely affect standards in the GCSE course.

Commentary

Examination results

119. The 2003 GCSE examination results were average. There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' results.

Standards and achievement

120. By Year 9, standards in games and gymnastics are average, representing satisfactory achievement overall. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in games; good work was seen by boys in rugby, and by girls in basketball and football. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, achieving appropriately alongside their classmates. By Year 11, standards are still average, and achievement is satisfactory. In the GCSE course, standards are average overall, but pupils' achievement is better in practical work, as seen in hockey, than in theoretical aspects. When pupils are required to write what they know and understand of theoretical aspects under test conditions, standards are currently below average. In the non-GCSE courses, standards are average with pupils achieving satisfactorily in hockey and badminton. Pupils' performance in extra-curricular sport is often above average, reflected in success in competition against local schools.

Teaching and learning

121. Pupils benefit from enthusiastic, knowledgeable teaching in all years. Good relationships create a positive climate for learning in most lessons. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have good attitudes to the subject, and there are high standards of participation, dress and behaviour in lessons. Pupils put good physical effort into their work. In Years 10 and 11, a significant number of pupils, particularly boys, have poor attitudes to learning. This was evident in a theory lesson, where pupils' behaviour was rude, immature and not conducive to learning. Pupils' poor behaviour was a major contributor to this unsatisfactory lesson. Teachers have to spend more time than should be necessary keeping pupils on task.
122. The best learning takes place when teaching has good pace, high expectations and challenge, especially when pupils are given a share of responsibility for their own learning. Marking is satisfactory, but does not indicate how pupils are performing against targets set. Insufficient attention is given in all years, however, to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the development of pupils' skills in evaluating and improving performance.

Leadership and management

123. Standards in Year 11, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are lower than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Most departmental documentation still predates Curriculum 2000 – over four years out of date. The department has only just begun to implement some of the new curriculum guidance, such as assessment levels of attainment, and teachers' insecurity in this aspect is reflected in over-generous Year 9 assessments in 2003.
124. The head of department recognises that there is much to do. A good development plan focuses on raising standards, and provides a vision for the way forward, but there is too little detail to show how this will be achieved. Schemes of work offer poor guidance to the three new teachers. There are no policies or guidance on implementing recent national strategies that should be being developed through the subject. A particular concern is the lack of any guidance on health and safety, and the absence of risk assessments. Recent arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning, and plans to support the three inexperienced teachers, are steps in the right direction for putting the department back on track.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Not applicable	Well below average
Achievement	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Very poor
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher responsible for business has not been given adequate guidance and support in order to promote high standards within the subject.
- Pupils are not being sufficiently challenged and this results in unsatisfactory achievement.
- Insufficient attention is being given to meeting pupils' individual needs.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to reflect on topical business issues.

Commentary

Examination results

125. Results in the 2002 and 2003 examinations were well below average; a high proportion of pupils failed to gain a grade. Pupils perform worse in business studies than in many of the other subjects that they study.

Standards and achievement

126. By the end of Year 11, pupils do not have a secure understanding of key business terms and concepts. Some Year 11 pupils could not create a balance sheet when given a case study and could not define 'fixed', 'current' or 'total' assets. Achievement is erratic, as pupils are not being adequately challenged. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are following the Applied Business (double award) GCSE and insufficient attention is given to the vocational aspects of the course. Pupils' knowledge, and understanding of the commercial world lack depth. There is a lack of business links in order to expand pupils' understanding of the world of business in practice.

Teaching and learning

127. Teachers use a limited range of teaching styles, which focus primarily on the content of the course. Too little demand is made of pupils and expectations are low. As a result, pupils do not sustain interest in their studies and their work patterns are inconsistent. Too little attention is given to the needs of the individual, especially those with special educational needs. Year 10 pupils demonstrated that they could use presentation software effectively when creating a report on internal and external communication but they worked at such a slow pace during the lesson that some actually learnt nothing. These pupils did not enter the room in the right frame of mind for learning. The teacher did not deal with chatting and inappropriate behaviour, and pupils did not make progress. They did not apply themselves to the tasks involved and even the higher attaining pupils learned spasmodically. Pupils are not being taught to think and learn for themselves. Teachers have good subject knowledge and demonstrate this in the way that they discuss their subject and they make clear and appropriate reference to current business

issues. Too little attention, however, is paid to the structure of lessons; lesson objectives are neither stated at the start nor summarised at the end. Pupils are, therefore, unaware of the learning that should have taken place.

Leadership and management

128. The leadership of business studies lacks drive and direction. It does not pay sufficient attention to the quality of teaching and learning or to standards within the subject. The teacher responsible has been given no guidance or support since she joined the school as a newly qualified teacher. She has not been given the appropriate authority to bring about change, nor have her management skills been developed. As a result of this, unsatisfactory progress has been made since the time of the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship and personal, social and health education are taught through the weekly tutorial period, with English and humanities making the main subject contributions.

Provision in citizenship is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is unsatisfactory and pupils are underachieving.
- There is not enough time in weekly tutorials for the development of citizenship skills.
- There are no consistent assessment procedures to check pupils' progress.
- There is no monitoring or evaluation of citizenship.
- Citizenship within subjects is not given a high enough profile and not made explicit.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Poor
Management	Poor
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Commentary

Examination results

129. Pupils do not follow an examination course in citizenship.

Standards and achievement

130. Pupils join the school with a very wide range of experiences in personal, social and health education and citizenship. By the end of Years 9 and 11, pupils have well below average skills of enquiry and knowledge about becoming informed citizens. This judgement was well reinforced by the very minimal work seen in the vast majority of pupils' files. By the end of Year 9, pupils have some understanding of the debating process; a minority experience the work of the school council. Levels of discussion and involvement are limited in the tutorial lessons. This is a consequence of time being shared with assemblies, constraining the development of such activities. Year 7 pupils showed some reluctance to listen, for instance, when discussing boxing as a sport. However, there are many willing to voice their opinions as shown in a Year 7 lesson on the media. By the end of Year 11, pupils have investigated such topics as racism, euthanasia, and prejudice and discrimination. Some show an understanding of the issues but a large majority of pupils have little interest. This was well exemplified in a Year 11 religious

education lesson on Muslim funerals. For all years, however, the amount of written work is extremely limited; one side of paper for a term's work is the norm. As a consequence, achievement by the end of Years 9 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

131. Citizenship and personal social and health education are taught each week in the tutorial lesson by 30 form tutors. Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, which is largely a consequence of bad behaviour and pupils' poor attitudes. Year assemblies considerably reduce tutorial time to 25 minutes and frequently the remaining time is less than this. Assemblies have limited citizenship content. The analysis of subjects allows some elements of citizenship to be taught through subjects but this is very inconsistent and not well developed. In the best lessons teachers have thought about the ways of teaching citizenship; for example, Year 9 pupils use group work to successfully plan weddings of different faiths and Year 11 pupils study different city cultures and their impact on modern poetry. However, citizenship, in subjects, is not made sufficiently explicit or given a high enough profile. There are big inconsistencies in teaching in both subjects and tutorials and, frequently, expectations are too low and the level of discussion remains low. The meagre amount of work found in pupils' files confirms the low expectations and this shows that no record has been made of class work. However, enrichment activities enable a small percentage of pupils to become involved in the local community. Overall, the quality of delivery of citizenship is weak, which is a consequence of inconsistency in teaching by a large number of teachers and the restrictive time allocated.

Leadership and management

132. The co-ordinator has made a thorough analysis of citizenship across the school and has developed a composite scheme of work for citizenship and personal, social and health education. However, the time allocation has severely constrained development. Monitoring of teaching and pupils' work has yet to be undertaken and no assessment takes place at all. Consequently there is insufficient information to enable monitoring of progress or judging of achievement. What appears on paper is not being carried out in practice.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, **eight** subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
General studies	8	62.5	78.6	12.5	25.7	21.3	30.0
Information technology	13	76.9	78.2	0.0	20.6	19.2	28.5

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	6	100.0	96.1	50.0	48.7	80.0	85.1
Biology	17	94.1	91.6	47.1	26.3	78.8	74.1
Business studies	6	100.0	96.4	0.0	57.1	63.3	76.5
Chemistry	8	87.5	94.0	62.5	45.9	95.0	81.1
Drama	5	100.0	98.1	0.0	41.5	72.0	82.9
English	25	96.0	98.3	44.0	36.5	81.6	80.1
French	7	100.0	96.2	28.6	46.1	77.1	83.0
Design and technology	9	100.0	95.3	55.6	35.5	93.3	76.5
General studies	36	88.9	90.1	44.4	29.1	77.8	69.3
Geography	12	100.0	97.1	41.7	40.5	88.3	80.9
History	9	100.0	97.1	55.6	41.0	86.7	81.2
Mathematics	13	92.3	93.3	61.5	52.2	96.9	84.7
Other social studies	9	88.9	94.3	33.3	38.9	73.3	77.7
Physics	12	100.0	92.8	58.3	42.8	95.0	78.6
Sports studies	5	100.0	95.4	0.0	29.5	68.0	73.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus for this report was on English and French.

English

English Language and Literature

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are mostly articulate and work together in an exceptionally open and co-operative manner, so helping each other to make good progress.
- Much of the teachers' marking is of very high quality and explains clearly to students what they need to do to improve.
- Some students do not develop independent learning skills to the extent that might be expected.

Commentary

Examination results

133. In 2003, results at A-level were average. In 2002 they were above average. Numbers studying the subject to AS and A levels have been relatively high in recent years. The numbers dropping out of the courses have been low.

Standards and achievement

134. Most students are articulate and contribute very well to whole-class and group discussion. They realise that making a full and thoughtful contribution to oral work increases their own understanding and progress and also provides the stimulus necessary to help others to develop their skills in communication. One consequence of this is that students generally perform especially well when analysing how writers present their attitudes and values. Students develop a full technical vocabulary, which enables them to describe the linguistic and literary features of the texts they study with an unusual degree of precision. However, this feature is more evident in students' written work than in their oral contributions. The standard of written work is variable. The best of it is of high quality, being carefully researched, well expressed and providing interesting personal insights. Some of the lower attaining students, particularly in Year 12, express themselves clumsily and make basic errors in their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Many students enjoy reading and are developing their own tastes, though some middle and lower attainers do not develop independent learning skills to the extent that might be expected.

Teaching and learning

135. Teachers possess good knowledge of the subject, are enthusiastic about it and are capable of communicating their enthusiasm to their students. The students, in turn, are keen to learn more and definitely want to make progress. Indeed, a number wish to study English or related subjects, such as journalism, at university and so see the skills they are developing in lessons as being important for their prospects in the future. Thus the atmosphere in many lessons is lively, industrious, purposeful and good humoured. Lessons are well planned and include a good variety of activities, including some instruction, discussion and writing. Whilst this mix does, in general, allow students good opportunities to be active in their own learning, on occasion the teacher does dominate the lesson. The resources used to support learning are up to date, varied and suitably challenging. Marking is of high quality and shows students what they need to do to improve; students value this. They also appreciate the extent to which teachers are willing to help them individually if they request it, including outside lesson time if necessary.

Leadership and management

136. The teachers work closely together and offer students a well co-ordinated programme of work. As a result of good leadership, standards have risen and the quality of education has improved.

Literacy across the curriculum

137. Standards of literacy are above average and pupils are well equipped to meet the demands of their subjects.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils improve their grammatical accuracy because of the emphasis teachers place on this during Year 12.
- Pupils improve their speaking skills by practising with the foreign language assistant.
- Sometimes teachers do not allow pupils to do enough of the work themselves in lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

138. Very few pupils were entered for the A-level examination in 2002 and 2003 so comparisons with national data are not valid. Students have mostly attained examination grades in line with their grades at GCSE.

Standards and achievement

139. Standards on both the AS course and the A-level course are average. By the end of Year 12, students are achieving satisfactorily because they spend a long time focusing on grammatical accuracy and so improve their spoken and written French. They also make progress in speaking as they have access to a native speaker and so can use their spoken language regularly. They cover topics which are appropriate for advanced level work, such as drugs and health issues; their arguments develop during the course and their accuracy improves. By the end of Year 13, students increase the range of topics they feel confident about discussing, including controversial areas such as the use of genetically modified crops. They work with increasing accuracy when writing, although this remains a weaker skill than listening and reading, where students become confident in dealing with complex texts.

Teaching and learning

140. Teachers spend much of the Year 12 course remedying deficiencies in students' understanding of grammar. Teachers conduct lessons mostly in French so pupils develop improved listening skills and they are also given some complicated passages to listen to on tapes. They are allowed to use individual headphones and pause the tape when they need to so they become quite proficient at this skill. Students complete homework diligently and work hard at home to research topics in more depth so that they come to lessons well prepared. Sometimes the lesson is dominated by the teacher talking to the students instead of allowing them opportunities to do the work themselves which means that the pace of lessons is slowed, but mostly students work hard and complete a lot of work. ICT is used effectively to give students access to authentic and recent articles so that they can refine their arguments and language skills.

Leadership and management

141. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The course is adapted to take account of the types of students entering, with a focus on how pupils are improving grammatical accuracy often high on the agenda.

MATHEMATICS

The school offers mathematics and further mathematics. The work of the students studying further mathematics was sampled and it is clear that they do very well indeed.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' knowledge of mathematics is good.
- Students have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of past work when introduced to a new topic.

- Communication between teachers in the department is not sufficient to raise achievement still further.

Commentary

Examination results

142. In 2002, the results at A-level were well above average. In 2003, the results were lower, but were in line with the national average.

Standards and achievement

143. Students have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of past work when introduced to a new topic. In Year 12, they understand the concepts of expectation and variance of a random variable. In Year 13 the students can expand algebraic expressions in ascending powers of x and use the result to make approximations. Overall students are achieving well given their standards on starting the course.

Teaching and learning

144. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics. In the better lessons, teachers encourage students to participate in discussions. Students respond well to this and volunteer suggestions in articulate ways. However, in a minority of lessons, opportunities are missed to involve students more actively. The better lessons proceed at a brisk pace and are planned well to allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage. Homework is set regularly to consolidate work introduced in the lesson. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to develop their study skills by encouraging them to research topics in preparation for lessons. The notes taken in class by students sometimes lack structure and do not always lend themselves to future revision. The marking of students' work contains good diagnostic comments that show the students where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

145. There is insufficient communication between teachers. As a result students encounter a range of mathematical approaches to tackle generic problems across modules. Ordinarily this would enhance students' learning, but the lack of a co-ordinated approach only serves to confuse them. Students also find the transition between GCSE and AS-level difficult to make, and so learning suffers. The monitoring of teaching is satisfactory, but not rigorous enough to enable good practice to be shared and teachers' skills enhanced. There is a comprehensive programme of study that follows the published syllabuses. However, the schemes of work lack guidance on the appropriate teaching methods and resources to enhance the teaching further. Teachers do support students well by providing tuition at lunchtimes.

Mathematics across the curriculum

146. The standard of mathematics across the curriculum is above average. In physics, for example, mathematical skills are generally good. However, the setting down of calculations is often casual and students need stronger reminders of the benefits of setting out calculations clearly and of remembering to use units.

SCIENCE

The focus for this report was on physics but biology and chemistry were also sampled. Teaching is good in both biology and chemistry and students are doing well.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students generally gain better A-level results in physics than might be expected from their GCSE results when they started the course.
- The teacher in charge of the subject ensures that students experience new ideas for themselves so that their learning is secure.
- Students enjoy the physics course and take an active part in lessons, posing questions of their own to improve their understanding.
- The department does not make enough use of lesson observations to share good ideas and ensure consistency in the quality of teaching.

Commentary

Examination results

147. A-level results in 2002 were well above the national average. In 2003, eight out of nine candidates gained pass grades, four with grades A or B and the other four with grade C.

Standards and achievement

148. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 generally have better knowledge and understanding of current topics than expected at this stage in the course. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, students coped well with understanding the link between waves and circular motion. In Year 13, students were generally successful with particularly challenging homework questions on electric fields. Some students produce work of a very high standard, notably in their individual 'research and presentation' assignments. One student, for example, chose the demanding topic 'the nature of mass', presenting the findings very clearly to make them accessible to the casual reader.
149. In both year groups, most students have well-ordered files containing detailed notes of good quality. However, some lower attaining students do not always present their calculations with sufficient care and their files are not as well organised as they should be, making them less useful for revision.
150. The school's 'value-added' analysis shows that students regularly gain better A-level results in physics than might be expected, given their GCSE results when they enter the course. Hence students' achievement in physics is good.

Teaching and learning

151. The teacher in charge of physics places great emphasis on students really experiencing new ideas for themselves and gradually developing a secure understanding of what happens and why. For example, Year 12 students were required to walk sedately past two speakers until

they genuinely heard the interaction between two sets of sound waves and appreciated the variation in the loudness of the sound at different locations.

152. Teachers mark students' work very carefully, giving detailed information on how the work could be improved. Regular tests ensure that students have a clear idea of how well they are doing in relation to their target grades. Occasionally, when teaching is satisfactory rather than good, there is a shortage of questions to involve students and check their understanding. Similarly, in such a lesson, too much time was spent on reviewing basic atomic structure that students already knew from their GCSE work.
153. Students generally enjoy their physics lessons and take an active part in their learning, asking questions when necessary to confirm and extend their understanding. They speak highly of the balance of fun and hard work in many lessons. However, these very positive attitudes do not always extend beyond lessons and several students in Year 13 had not done a reading task that they had been asked to complete. Students' files show that they experience a variety of interesting activities, including practical investigations and giving presentations on selected topics to the class. The 'Advancing Physics' course, which students follow, makes very effective use of ICT and students value the easy access to information and resources that this provides. However, the stock of relevant books in the school library is very small and not sufficient to encourage students to read beyond the course material.

Leadership and management

154. The teacher in charge of the subject is enthusiastic and very keen for students to achieve as well as possible. He has, in a relatively short time, developed significant skills in teaching this course. It has been difficult, so far, for him to monitor the work of the various, more experienced, colleagues who have shared the teaching of physics in Year 12 and Year 13. However, his knowledge and understanding of the course material are now very secure and it is necessary for him to take a more active monitoring role to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching for students.
155. Since the previous inspection, A-level results have risen from above average in 1997 to well above average in 2002. Good teaching has been maintained through several changes in staffing. Hence there has been good progress in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was information and communication technology.

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Not applicable
Achievement	Good	Not applicable
Teaching and learning	Good	Not applicable

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and, as a result, students achieve well.
- Relationships between staff and students are good and this helps students to gain in confidence.
- Too few students are provided with the opportunity to improve their ICT skills.

Commentary

Examination results

156. The school offers AVCE and key skills courses for a small number of students in Year 12. In 2002, results at AS-level were below average.

Standards and achievement

157. Students following the AVCE course have a sound grasp of spreadsheet modelling systems. Higher attainers use macros with ease whilst lower attainers struggle with the concept of multiple function tasks. Students have average keyboard skills and use many of the functions of word processing to enhance their coursework. Higher attainers discuss the 'paperless society' in depth whilst lower attainers do not always realise the impact of ICT on society.
158. Students following the key skills course have a basic understanding of word processing. Their practical skills are better than their knowledge of word processor functions. Most students know that text can be justified but do not know when this function might be used.

Teaching and learning

159. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Teachers know the requirements of the AVCE course well and students are achieving well as a result. Students know how to target their work so as to score higher marks. Students have good attitudes to the subject and are keen to compete with one another. Teachers provide good support for lower attainers, modifying tasks to meet the needs of individual students. This was seen in a Year 12 class, when the teacher set students the task of producing an invoice system but with differing requirements. This enables all students to make good progress.

Leadership and management

160. The leadership of the subject is good. New courses have been introduced. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved and achievement is now good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

161. Apart from those students following AVCE or key skills courses, there is no separate provision for students to improve their ICT skills. However, many students do make use of the school's ICT systems to complete coursework, and standards are broadly average.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on geography, but history, psychology and religious education were sampled. Teaching is good in each of these last three subjects and students are doing well.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average as a result of good teaching.
- Students get good support and it ensures that achievement is good.
- Teachers do not make enough demands on students in discussions.

Commentary

Examination results

162. In the 2003 A-level examination students achieved well, but the low entry numbers do not enable comparison to the national average to be made. Students attained similar results to those in 2002, which were above the national average.

Standards and achievement

163. By the end of Year 13, students have a wide range of knowledge and understanding of topics such as industrial change in the UK in recent times. This is well supported through case study and field visits to Birmingham and research into the impact of the new M6 (Toll) on the economic and social life of the region. Students have good research skills and collect data to illustrate findings through the use of ICT. Mathematical applications are used well in studies of stream flow in fieldwork. Standards of written work are average. Whereas many write detailed and well-structured notes, the writing of others is insufficiently detailed and too theoretical, without using evidence and applying knowledge to places. Lower attaining students do not research topics widely enough so answers are sufficiently detailed.

Teaching and learning

164. Students achieve well because teaching is good. Teachers are appropriately qualified; explanations are clear so students make good progress in understanding topics. Students benefit from the support and guidance they receive, particularly the detailed advice and comment given in assignments. As a result they improve their understanding of topics and assignment writing skills. Lessons are well planned and incorporate a variety of activity to support learning, but too often students are not challenged enough in discussion to debate and demonstrate understanding of topics.

Leadership and management

165. The subject is led and managed well. The head of subject has been effective in ensuring that the longer-term staffing needs are met and has given good support to newly appointed staff. This has facilitated a smooth transition into the life of the school so helping to ensure above average standards are maintained. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection, particularly in above average results, but the use of ICT needs more development.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focused on art and design, but music and drama were sampled. Students are doing as well as expected in music, but are achieving very well in drama.

ART AND DESIGN

Provision in art is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are enthusiastic and committed to the subject.
- Teaching is good; students are given imaginative support.
- Accommodation and resources are good within the specialist studio.
- Students do not have enough written guidance to support their independent learning.

Commentary

Examination results

166. Results at A-level were average in 2002, but were lower in 2003.

Standards and achievement

167. All three students in Year 13 are on course to achieve a pass grade. They have at least average skills in drawing and painting and research their topics in good depth. Their present work on batik fabric printing is average. They have amalgamated ideas well to achieve striking designs with good use of line and a good appreciation of composition. The large group of students taking AS-level are enthusiastic and dynamic in approach to their work. Their present work, inspired by the art of other cultures, is detailed and creative. They are supported in these studies by a very good range of artefacts from a wide range of different cultures. These studies make a good contribution to their spiritual, social and cultural awareness.

Teaching and learning

168. The teachers have good knowledge and expertise. They guide their students well, enabling them to research the work of other artists and art movements for inspiration for their own work. They also help students to evaluate and assess their own work so they gain a deeper knowledge and appreciation of art. The students show good commitment to their work and make good use of the sixth form art studio facilities outside of lessons. However, they do not have enough detailed written guidance on how to research and develop their ideas further in order to reach the higher grades. There is good provision for ICT within the art studio and this contributes to students' success. The students are given good guidance on how to write and present their critical studies. They have access to some high quality studies by former students that provide both guidance and inspiration.

Leadership and management

169. There is clear vision, and a well-structured scheme of work that provides good guidance for new teachers. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained and teaching remains good.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Very poor
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons do not challenge students sufficiently in order for them to achieve their potential.
- Teachers do not use a variety of appropriate teaching and learning strategies to best support independent learning.
- There are insufficient business links to expand students' vocational understanding
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questions well to probe students' understanding.

Commentary

Examination results

170. Results in 2002 were well below average. There are no A-level results for 2003.

Standards and achievement

171. Year 12 students do not yet demonstrate a secure understanding of key business terms and concepts. In a lesson on budgeting, many could not state the advantages and disadvantages of 'zero' and 'flexible' budgeting. Few understand budgetary variances or variance analysis. These students also lacked basic note-taking skills and merely copied from the board. Year 13 students can competently use a range of business terminology, as they demonstrated when looking at venture capitalism, but there are deficiencies in their analytical and evaluative skills and this restricts higher level attainment.

Teaching and learning

172. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to underpin discussions and to lend clarity to explanations provided. This was evident when the teacher was giving examples of employee participation in the workplace. Year 13 students enjoyed relating current changing patterns of employment to historical comparisons. The main weakness in teaching, however, is that teachers do not challenge the students adequately, nor do they encourage the development of appropriate independent learning skills. Students lack the ability to work independently or collaborate constructively. The range of teaching activities employed in the

sixth form does not meet the full range of students' differing, individual needs. The quality of marking is improving, but insufficient attention is paid to target setting. Forms of assessment and recording are limited. Students are unable to evaluate their own work systematically and they do not have a clear picture of their achievement or of how to develop their learning further.

Leadership and management

173. The leadership lacks drive and direction. It does not pay sufficient attention to the teaching, learning or the standards within the subject. The teacher responsible for the subject has been given no guidance or support since she joined the school as a newly qualified teacher. There is a lack of systematic approaches and insufficient attention is given to raising standards. Insufficient use is made of external business links – either as speakers or visits – to fully develop students' understanding of the world of business in practice.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	6
How inclusive the school is		5
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	7
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	6
Overall standards achieved		6
Students' achievement	3	6
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		5
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	3	6
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	5
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		5
The quality of education provided by the school		6
The quality of teaching	3	6
How well students learn	3	6
The quality of assessment	4	5
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	5	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		5
Support, advice and guidance for students	4	5
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
The leadership and management of the school		6
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		5
The leadership of other key staff	4	6
The effectiveness of management	4	6

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5);

poor (6); very poor (7).